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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1150  
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UNCLAS ACCRA 001013

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GH](#) [CI](#) [TO](#)

SUBJECT: GHANAIAN NGO HOSTS TOGOLESE AND IVORIAN PARTY TALKS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In two separate events, Ghana's Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) hosted conferences with Togolese and Ivoirian political parties in Accra to discuss creative listening and conflict management skills. The IEA expects to host a second conference for Togolese parties in May. The Ivoirian conference resulted in a joint communique in which parties declared their willingness to continue to interact with their Ghanaian facilitators on a quarterly basis. The IEA's efforts highlight the constructive, often low-key role of Ghana in promoting peace in the region. End Summary.

12. (SBU) With financial assistance from the Dutch Government, the IEA launched its first attempt at international mediation among representatives of various Togolese parties in December, 2005. All of the major opposition parties attended workshops in Accra, and one party allied with the GOT, the CPP, also participated. Organizers described the gathering as helpful and positive, expressing the hope that the ruling RPT would send a representative to the next such informal conference, tentatively planned for May, 2006.

13. (SBU) The IEA organized a similar event for seven Ivoirian political parties, including the President's Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) on April 7-8 in Accra. During the opening of the conference, Ghanaian speakers emphasized the importance of free expression, free association, tolerance, and learning to disagree "agreeably," noting that a small amount of arguing is good for democracy process and enriches the decision-making process. IEA Acting Head of Governance Kwesi Jonah remarked that Ghanaians "feel your pain" and want to share their experiences in developing a stable democracy. One of the keys to Ghana's positive evolution had been the establishment of back-channel contacts between political opponents, away from the glare of the media, something that Ghana's development partners, including the U.S. and Canada, had encouraged, Jonah said.

14. (U) Jonah urged his Ivoirian guests to avoid political parties based on ethnicity or religion; to contest the next elections, rather than boycotting them; to rebuild trust and confidence among themselves; to find a way to keep the army in its barracks and generate employment for the youth; and to limit political ambitions for the greater good. He invited the audience to join in the "exhilarating task" of restoring Cote d'Ivoire to its once leading position in the sub-region as a nation promoting order, stability, and prosperity.

15. (SBU) In an April 11 meeting with Poloff, Jonah described these sessions as "very successful." The April event was more difficult to organize, he said, requiring numerous trips to Cote d'Ivoire to convince parties to participate. Jonah said President Gbagbo enthusiastically backed the idea of a multi-party meeting with Ghanaian counterparts. He praised the joint communique Ivoirian

participants issued on April 8, in which they vowed to continue interacting with their Ghanaian counterparts on a quarterly basis. Jonah declared that Ghana was willing to host similar gatherings for other African countries facing political difficulties. He remarked that not long ago, meetings such as these would have been resisted as "interference in another country's internal affairs."

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The IEA sessions on Togo and Cote d'Ivoire received scant publicity, in keeping with the organizers' preferences. However, they appear to have played a constructive role in bridging dialogue in both Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. They also highlighted Ghana's constructive, often low-key role in seeking solutions to regional conflicts.

¶7. (U) This telegram was cleared by Embassies Lome and Abidjan prior to transmission.

LANIER